



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Justice**
Corrective Services

Response to OICS Draft Report:

**2022 Inspection of Roebourne Regional
Prison**

October 2022

Version 1.3

Response Overview

Introduction

On 3 November 2021, the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) announced the commencement of the 2022 Inspection of Roebourne Regional Prison (Roebourne).

As per the standard process, the Department of Justice (the Department) facilitated the provision of a wide range of documentation, including policies and procedures, as well as access to systems, facilities, staff, prisoners and contractors upon OICS' request for the purpose of the inspection.

On 6 September 2022, the Department received the draft inspection report from OICS for review and comment. The draft report has highlighted key findings and made 14 recommendations. The Department has reviewed the draft report and provides further context, comments, and responses to the recommendations as below.

Appendix A contains comments linked to sections in the report for the Inspector's attention and consideration when finalising the report.

Review Comments

Roebourne manages a culturally diverse prisoner population of both male and female sentenced and remand prisoners with varying security classifications. It is situated in the Pilbara region that is dominated by the resources sector and faces the most significant recruitment challenges.

As evidenced by the OICS inspection, the location of the prison continues to impact Roebourne's ability to recruit and retain staff, resulting in staffing shortages. Infrastructure and maintenance projects are also impacted due to the inability to source qualified tradespersons from within the Pilbara region.

Despite the recruitment and resourcing challenges, Roebourne continues to make improvements in many aspects of its operations through good governance and strong leadership.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has become more stable through the permanent appointment of several key positions since the inspection took place. The establishment of the Assistant Superintendent Offender Services (ASOS) in December 2021 and its subsequent permanent appointment has expanded Roebourne's ability to delivery services to prisoners. The Security Manager position has also been filled permanently since the inspection, and the Superintendent position is anticipated to be filled permanently following the completion of a Superintendent pool recruitment process that is currently underway.

Although there are positive outcomes in relation to the SLT appointments, recruitment across Roebourne is not without its challenges. The issue of staff shortages in the regions has been highlighted by OICS in several of their inspection reports and unfortunately is an enduring challenge that is commonplace in regional WA. It should be noted that recruiting to the regions is an issue faced by both the public and private sector.

Barriers to successfully recruiting staff to regional areas are often beyond the Department's control. These include shortages of Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH), and limitations in the provision of additional incentives for regional based employment under available public sector employment provisions and

conditions. The recruitment of staff to regional facilities remains a priority for the Department and the Department continues to work with its Human Resources and Public Affairs Branches to develop creative and attractive recruitment campaigns in attempt to address this issue.

The OICS Inspection Report notes that staff indicated increased concerns about poor or inappropriate behavior between staff members including verbal abuse, physical abuse and racist remarks. The Department has clear policies and procedures including the Code of Conduct which outlines the behavioral expectations of all Department employees. Behaviours such as bullying, unlawful discrimination or harassment in any form based on grounds such as national origin, race, culture, appearance, language, gender, sexual orientation, age, place of residence, belief, religion, political affiliation, social, economic or health status, family responsibilities or marital status are not tolerated and should be reported to the Department's People Culture and Standards Division for assessment of the conduct and disciplinary action as required.

The Code of Conduct and the expectations of the Director General are reinforced to staff through mandatory Accountable and Ethical Decision-Making online training and mandatory face-to-face training sessions conducted by the Department's Management Engagement and Intervention Team. These sessions are delivered at all Corrective Services worksites including Roebourne.

The Department acknowledges climate control in the mainstream accommodation in Roebourne has been a recurring issue raised by OICS. Roebourne continues to monitor the situation and has progressively implemented improved heat mitigation strategies, including the prisoners' access to the air-conditioned units and facilities as required.

Previous attempts to secure funding to implement the infrastructure required to facilitate air-conditioning at Roebourne have not been successful, however, the feasibility of providing air-conditioning at Roebourne continues to be under consideration.

Roebourne has a large percentage of remand prisoners who opt to remain at the facility as a way of maintaining family and cultural connections. The Department acknowledges services to remand prisoners are limited due to the uncertainty surrounding their length of imprisonment. Prisoners however have access to basic education and other voluntary programs as applicable. All prisoners, both sentenced and remand, are offered employment and commence at the same remuneration level with the opportunity to progress to high levels of gratuity based on their performance and work ethic.

In relation to work camp placements for remand prisoners, the Department's priority is community safety and prisoners must have a minimum-security rating to be eligible for placement at a work camp. Remand prisoners are rated as maximum-security until sentenced. Following sentencing their security rating may be reduced to minimum which then makes them eligible for assessment against the eligibility criteria for work camp placement.

It is pleasing to note OICS' acknowledgement of the successful management of COVID-19 at Roebourne, including the high degree of training staff were provided through preparedness exercises, to ensure COVID positive prisoners and those suspected of being positive to COVID-19 were managed in a safe and risk averse manner.

OICS is also complementary of the Roebourne Work Camp that has successfully been providing prisoners with enhanced opportunities to improve their rehabilitation prospects by participating in programs and skills that help the Roebourne community through conservation, maintenance and construction projects.

The Department has supported most of the recommendations made by OICS, noting that some are supported in principle as there may be practical impediments to their implementation, e.g., may require research, additional resources (human, financial and physical), and cooperation from external stakeholder/s. Nevertheless, the Department will continue to look at ways to improve services and outcomes for staff and all prisoners at Roebourne.

Response to Recommendations

1 The Department should develop a more effective system to support prisoner access to basic legal knowledge and information.

Level of Acceptance: Supported
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Male Prisons

Response:

Roebourne will develop local processes for all prisoners to enable access to legal knowledge and information. This will include support to prisoners requiring assistance in the use of technology to access the information as required.

2 Roebourne should trial the use of Aboriginal interpreters for key interactions with prisoners from a particular language group.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Male Prisons

Response:

The Department supports and encourages the use of interpreting services for non-English speaking prisoners and will explore a potential arrangement with Aboriginal Interpreting WA (AIWA) for the provision of interpreting services at prison facilities.

3 Restore in-situ lunch breaks to maximise participation for those prisoners engaged in constructive activities.

Level of Acceptance: Not Supported
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Male Prisons

Response:

Implementation of in-situ lunch breaks is not feasible at the present time due to the current recruitment and resourcing challenges at Roebourne. The Department does however support greater access to constructive activities and Roebourne will explore other means of enabling this to occur.

4 Extend and promote access to e-visits at Roebourne.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Male Prisons

Response:

Connecting prisoners with their families remains a priority for the Department. Roebourne will engage with the Department's infrastructure and technology branches to assess the feasibility of installing additional e-visit terminals at the facility and promote the use of e-visit through the provision of assistance and support as required.

5 Roebourne and the chaplaincy service should ensure regular religious services and effective processes for pastoral care.

Level of Acceptance: Supported – Current Practice / Project
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Male Prisons

Response:

The Chaplaincy Service has re-commenced in full at Roebourne following the removal of COVID-19 related restrictions. All prisoners are informed of the availability of the service and encouraged to attend.

6 All residential and special cells at Roebourne should have effective climate control.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate: Procurement, Infrastructure and Contracts

Response:

The Department continues to improve its heat mitigation strategies and to assess the feasibility of installing climate control systems at Roebourne.

Previous attempts to secure funding to implement the infrastructure required to facilitate air-conditioning at Roebourne have not been successful, however, the feasibility of providing air-conditioning at Roebourne continues to be under consideration.

7 The health centre should be refurbished and extended to make it fit for purpose; this should accommodate general health, telehealth, mental health, allied health, dental health, disability access, health education, officer station, internal waiting room, crisis care and medical observation.

Level of Acceptance: Not Supported
Responsible Division: Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate: Procurement, Infrastructure and Contracts

Response:

The recommendation involves major reconstruction of Roebourne's health centre which will require a substantial redesign in consultation with the Department of Health and major capital works requiring significant government funding. Due to the pressing demands on the Department's resources and other significant funding priorities, there are currently no plans to construct a new health centre at Roebourne.

The Department's Long Term Infrastructure Plan is reviewed each year and critical infrastructure works are determined and prioritised as part of the plan.

8 Ensure regular access to dental services for prisoners at Roebourne, including for basic preventative and restorative care.

Level of Acceptance: Noted
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services

Response:

Dental care to prisoners is provided by the Department of Health's Dental Health Services (DHS) and is in line with community standards. The current average wait time for public dental care is approximately 12 months. The Department continues to liaise with DHS to increase and improve dental care services to the prison population.

9 As a matter of urgency, the Department should recruit and appoint a PSO and AVS staff for Roebourne Regional Prison.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services

Response:

A recent recruitment process for the Prison Support Officer (PSO) at Roebourne failed to attract interest in the role. The Department will continue to undertake recurrent recruitment for vacant PSO positions across the state.

In the absence of a PSO at Roebourne, The Department's Prison Support Services (PSS) team continue to work closely with Roebourne's senior management team to provide ongoing support and management of the Peer Support Program. Remote services are delivered by a Senior Prison Support Officer via Teams where PSO referrals can be actioned.

As with the PSOs, recurrent recruitment processes to fill vacant Aboriginal Visitor positions across the custodial estate are ongoing. Previous attempts to recruit to the Aboriginal Visitor position at Roebourne failed to attract interest in the role. Support continues to be made available to prisoners via the PSS.

10 Quarantine at least one report writer position to fully engage in assessments.

Level of Acceptance: Not Supported
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Male Prisons

Response:

The Department does not support the quarantining of prison officers solely for the purpose of conducting assessments. Prison officer duties are prioritised based on the individual and unique operational needs of each facility to ensure the safety and security of prisoners and staff.

The Department is however continuing its efforts to improve the assessment process, including the resourcing required to meet the demand.

11 1) Identify or develop more culturally responsive addictions, family violence and general offending programs for delivery in the Pilbara.

2) Develop a delivery methodology to address the program needs of Pilbara women without requiring time out of country.

3) Provide Cognitive Brief Intervention or a similar intervention for male and female remandees and short-term sentenced prisoners at Roebourne on a regular basis.

Level of Acceptance: Supported in Principle
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services

Response:

The Department has two FTE based at Roebourne who facilitate criminogenic programs. Roebourne's program delivery schedule reflects the current greatest demand being family and domestic violence and alcohol and other drug programs.

Roebourne also has limited infrastructure available for program delivery with only one room available to facilitate groups. Criminogenic programs would have to be cancelled to schedule regular Cognitive Brief Intervention for either male or female remand prisoners.

The Department is committed to building a suite of contemporary and evidence-based treatment programs that are responsive to the needs of the WA offender cohort and is currently developing a Continuous Improvement Framework that will provide structure and transparency around the review of treatment programs.

Improvements will include the "what", "how" and "when" of program delivery as well as improvements to the governance around these services. The services will be driven by data on the needs of the WA prisoner cohort.

12 Recruit and appoint to all of the positions in the education and training team at Roebourne so that prisoners can reliably access core programs and other suitable courses.

Level of Acceptance: Supported
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Offender Services

Response:

The delivery of education and training at Roebourne has been impacted due to absences. The substantive Education Campus Manager is scheduled to return from leave in November 2022, and the acting Campus Manager will revert to their substantive Prison Education Coordinator position.

Recruitment is underway to fill the vacant Aboriginal Education Worker position.

13 Plan for a more suitable facility for incarcerated women in the Pilbara.

Level of Acceptance: Not Supported
Responsible Division: Corporate Services
Responsible Directorate: Procurement, Infrastructure and Contracts

Response:

The planning for a suitable facility for incarcerated women in the Pilbara is not within the current scope of the Department's Long-Term Custodial Infrastructure Plan.

The Department, however, is currently mapping out specific and targeted services required for women across the women's estate, including for women in regional prisons.

14 Review staffing to provide for more consistent, effective and comprehensive provision of services to and custodial management of women at Roebourne.

Level of Acceptance: Supported – Current Practice / Project
Responsible Division: Corrective Services
Responsible Directorate: Adult Male Prisons

Response:

The Department has committed to undertake a staffing review through the Prison Services Evaluation project. This will identify essential services and staffing requirements to support service delivery for male and female prisoners across the custodial estate.
